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Enhancing Digital Access: A Study of Infrastructure Facilities in Agricultural University Libraries of Karnataka

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Abstract

The study assesses the accessibility, quality, and infrastructure challenges associated with accessing Online Information Resources (OIRs) at agricultural university libraries in Karnataka. A standardized questionnaire was used to collect data from 150 research scientists and librarians at six Agricultural University Libraries in Karnataka. The findings show that all the libraries use library management systems, and UAS Raichur and UAS Bangalore are the leading database providers. Some of the most common issues include a lack of funding, expensive membership fees, and insufficient user training in some institutions. Scholars are well-versed in OIR, with 88% aware of the items they have subscribed to. The study concludes that while the infrastructure is generally adequate, there are gaps in access to resources and funding that must be addressed by targeted investment, resource-sharing programs, ICT skill development programs, and the establishment of institutional repositories.

Keywords: Agriculture University Libraries, CeRA, Information and Communication Technology, Krishikosh, Online Information Resources, ONOS

1. Introduction

Higher education's growing reliance on digital tools has changed how researchers find and use information, especially in subjects like agriculture that require much research. Online Information Resources (OIR), comprising e-journals, databases, digital archives, and open access platforms, have become vital tools for agricultural research academics, giving prompt access to an extensive range of scholarly literature. However, how well these resources are used depends a lot on the infrastructure of university libraries. Reliable internet connectivity, contemporary computer systems, specialized access terminals, subscription management systems, and supportive technical services are necessary to ensure seamless OIR access.

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Agricultural universities in Karnataka are significant for improving research and education in many areas of agriculture and related fields. The libraries at these universities are the main routes to get to OIR. They help scholars talk to each other and conduct studies based on evidence. However, differences in the infrastructure available at different schools can significantly impact how scholars find, use, and access digital resources in their research. Evaluating the condition of the infrastructure is crucial to discern strengths, deficiencies, and prospects for improvement.

2. Review of Literature

Chikkamanju (2017) indicated that all four agricultural university libraries in Karnataka offer basic information and services. However, it also points out that they need to be updated more often and have better infrastructure to simplify accessing online information resources like e-resources and online periodicals. Buitrago (2022) studied that the paper does not explicitly discuss the availability of infrastructure for accessing online information resources in the agricultural university libraries of Karnataka. Pratibha (2024) evaluated that the research is confined to libraries in Bengaluru and underscores that university libraries exhibit greater involvement in digitization than college libraries. It stresses that participants like decision-makers, librarians, and information professionals need to make big contributions to keep digitization going and move it forward. The paper does not explicitly assess the accessibility of infrastructure for online information resources in the agricultural university libraries of Karnataka, as examined by Walmiki (2010). It emphasizes faculty awareness and utilization of the UGC-Infonet Digital Library Consortium resources. Bhattacharyya (2023) in his study indicated that most of the respondents were familiar with the N-LIST program and utilized its materials for research and project development. Respondents were also very happy with the N-LIST program's facilities. This study helps library and information workers from different universities understand how useful the N-LIST program is and how important it is to have programs that teach people how to use e-resources. Giddaiah (2017) showed that the paper does not specifically assess the infrastructural facilities for accessing online information resources in the agricultural university libraries of Karnataka. It talks about the different services and resources that university libraries in Karnataka offer, such as e-resources and networking. Kannappanavar (2001) explained that the University of Agricultural Science Libraries in Karnataka don't have enough infrastructure, such as databases and full IT application implementation, which makes it hard to access online information resources. Parvathamma and Shinde (2015) viewed that the paper does not specifically assess the accessibility of infrastructure for online information resources in the agricultural university libraries of Karnataka. Rajawat (2023) highlighted the rising demand for digital agricultural resources, which provide greater accessibility and efficiency than traditional print materials while strengthening library services vital to agricultural research and education. Uplaonkar (2018) examined the use of information resources and services by postgraduate students and research scholars at the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad. It emphasizes the significance of comprehending the frequency of library visits and the utilization of both printed and electronic information resources by users. The research seeks to evaluate user satisfaction concerning library resources and services, signifying a necessity for enhancement in these domains.

3. Research Objectives

The following are some of the pertinent research objectives framed particularly for this study:

- To find out the availability of infrastructure facilities for accessing online information resources in the Agricultural University libraries in Karnataka

- To know the awareness of online information resources among research scholars
- To assess research scholars' satisfaction with the infrastructure provided for accessing online resources.
- To identify the key barriers faced by university librarians in Karnataka in the adoption and utilization of online information resources
- To identify the problems faced by the research scholars while accessing Online Information Resources

4. Significance of the Study

This study shows how the Karnataka Agricultural University libraries adapt to the digital age. As digital tools become more important in higher education, libraries play a key role in supporting learning and research (American Library Association, 2020). The findings highlight areas needing attention-like limited use of software, online databases, and digital repositories-and offer practical ideas to improve services (Monopoli, 2002). It also helps guide university leaders on where to invest, especially in infrastructure and ICT training (Kumar, 2011). Differences in staff digital skills indicate the need for structured training (Ifijeh, 2011). The study raises concerns about funding and knowledge gaps, which could lead to digital inequality if not addressed.

5. Research Methodology

The study utilized a descriptive survey approach with a standardized questionnaire to gather quantitative and categorical data regarding infrastructural amenities, awareness levels, and user satisfaction across several university libraries. The target population included 6 librarians and research scholars from six major agricultural universities in Karnataka. From these universities, samples of 150 research scholars were selected using purposive sampling, comprising both librarians and research scholars actively using OIRs. Thirty-five questionnaires were distributed per university, ensuring proportional representation; 150 completed responses were finally received and analyzed. Collected data were analyzed using descriptive statistical methods such as frequency distribution, percentages, and cross-tabulation to summarize findings on infrastructure status, user awareness, satisfaction levels, and barriers. Data comparisons across universities were used to detect disparities and performance trends. SPSS software is used to analyze the data collected through the questionnaire. Ethical standards were maintained throughout the study. Respondents participated voluntarily, and anonymity was preserved. The study focused exclusively on agricultural university libraries within Karnataka and considered researchers and librarians as primary respondents. Undergraduate users were excluded, as the emphasis was on active research scholars.

6. Data Analysis and Interpretation

Data interpretation is essential in research to convert unprocessed data into insightful knowledge. It enables researchers to spot links, patterns, and trends supporting their research topic analysis and well-informed findings. Better understanding and well-informed decision-making are fostered by practical data interpretation, which advances the field.

6.1. Demographic Information of the Research Scholars

Table 1 indicates that the age distribution of agricultural university research academics is highly skewed, and gender representation is more equal but still uneven. Of 150 respondents, 90 (60.00%) are men, and 60 (40.00%) are women.

Table 1: Demographic information of the research scholars

Gender wise distribution	Frequency	Percentage
Male	90	60.00
Female	60	40.00
Total	150	100.0
Age		
Below 25 years	23	15.33
26-40	127	84.66
Total	150	100.0

This suggests that although men predominate, there is a higher percentage of women participating than is typically the case in agricultural research settings. Although male dominance persists, gender diversity is increasing. Of the 127 scholars, 23 (15.33%) are younger than 25, while the majority (84.66%) are between the ages of 26 and 40. This implies that many study participants are advanced or mid-career academics with prior work or field experience. The absence of younger researchers points to obstacles or postponed research program enrolment. Indicating experience-driven involvement and pointing to strategies for promoting early research engagement and gender inclusion, the demographic profile reveals modest gender imbalance and a high concentration of research activity among mid-age scholars.

6.2. Availability of Digital Infrastructure

Table 2 reveals the status of digital infrastructure facilities provided at agricultural university libraries in Karnataka. It demonstrates a combination of strengths and places for growth. Most university libraries use Koha, open-source library management software, including those at UHS Bagalkot, UAS Raichur, Shivamogga, Dharwad, and KVAFSU.

Table 2: Digital infrastructure availability

University/Library	Software	ICT Skill	Online DBs	Repositories
UAS, Bagalkot	Koha	Good	1	No
UAS, Dharwad	E-Lib	Good	3	Yes
UAS, Raichur	Koha	Good	5	Yes
UAS, Shivamogga	Koha	Good	1	Yes
UAS, Bangalore	Koha	Very Good	1	Yes
KVAFSU, Bidar	Koha	Good	1	No

This demonstrates a preference for inexpensive, community-supported tools. However, UAS Bangalore stands out for employing E-Lib, implying heritage integration or distinct operating requirements. Regarding ICT skills, most libraries say that their staff have a good level of competence, except for the University of Agricultural Sciences, Dharwad, which rates its staff very well. This demonstrates a generally capable staff, but it also indicates the potential benefits of additional ICT training and capacity building across institutions.

6.3. Awareness of Online Information Resources by Research Scholars

Table 3 depicts that all 150 research scholars (100%) said they frequently visited the campus library across the six universities. This reveals that the library is an important academic support system in these universities and shows a high culture of library utilization among researchers.

Table 3: Awareness of online information resources

University/Library	visit library			Awareness of OIR			Awareness of subscribed OIR in the library		
	Yes	No	total	Yes	No	Total	Yes	No	Total
UAS, Bagalkot	25	---	25	25	---	25	22	3	25
UAS, Dharwad	25	---	25	25	---	25	23	2	25
UAS, Raichur	25	---	25	25	---	25	23	2	25
UAS, Shivamogga	25	---	25	25	---	25	21	4	25
UAS, Bangalore	25	---	25	25	---	25	23	2	25
KVAFSU, Bidar	25	---	25	25	---	25	20	5	25
Total	150	---	150	150		150	132	18	150
Frequency in Percentage	100%	-----	100%	100%		100%	88%	12%	100%

Every scholar (150 out of 150) acknowledged the existence of internet information sources. According to this, researchers who study agricultural research are generally highly digitally literate and aware of the availability of web-based academic resources. Coursework requirements, research needs, orientation sessions, and peer pressure are some of the factors that may be involved. Overall awareness of subscribed OIRs is strong (88%), demonstrating that most research scholars are well-versed in the digital resources available through their libraries. AS Dharwad, Raichur, and Bangalore have the greatest levels of awareness (92%), indicating that the local library teams communicate effectively and educate their patrons.

6.4. Library Infrastructure Facilities

Table 4 reveals that the opinions of research scholars at the agricultural universities in Karnataka are constructive in determining the quality of library infrastructure, particularly in making online information resources easier to use. Based on a five-point rating system ranging from Excellent to Very Poor, the results show that most infrastructure components have high satisfaction levels.

Table 4: Grading of Library Infrastructure

Library Infrastructure Facilities	Excellent	Very Good	Good	Fair	Very Poor
Availability of Computers	83%	17%	-----	-----	--------
Internet / Wi-Fi Facility	84%	16%	-----	------	-------
Server System	65%	22%	13%	--------	-------
UPS facilities	76%	24%	-----	-------	-------
Collection of E-Resources	52%	35%	3%	9%	-------

There is sufficient and well-maintained computer access, as 83% of academics rate it as Excellent and 17% as Very Good-strong infrastructural functionality combined with a special requirement to increase the accessibility of digital content. Strong digital connectivity that facilitates simple access to e-resources is also shown by the 84% of respondents who assessed the Internet/Wi-Fi facility as Excellent and the 16% who ranked it as Very Good. The server systems were rated as Excellent by 65% of the institutions, Very Good by 22%, and Good by 13% of the institutions. Although these scores showed overall reliability, a few universities had minor concerns. UPS (power backup) facilities have effective power continuity systems that minimize disruptions, as evidenced by the 76% of respondents who ranked them as Excellent and 24% as Very Good. The e-resource collection received more mixed reviews, with 52% praising it, 35% Very Good, 3% Good, and 9% Fair. While most academics are generally content, some think access has to be improved, maybe by offering more comprehensive and up-to-date content. Although there is a specific recommendation to increase the availability of digital content, the overall results demonstrate good infrastructure performance.

6.5. Barriers in the Collection of Online Information Resources

According to the data in Table 5, while every agricultural university library in Karnataka has different difficulties, some problems are the same for all. Five of six libraries cited a lack of financing as the biggest obstacle. The degree of support offered to students and researchers is impacted by this budgetary limitation, which restricts their capacity to create or grow digital collections and services.

Table 5: Barriers in the collection of online information resources

University/Library	Lack of funds	Lack of knowledge	Cost of OIR	Vendor Limitations
UAS, Bagalkot	Yes	No	No	No
UAS, Dharwad	Yes	Yes	No	No
UAS, Raichur	Yes	Yes	No	No
UAS, Shivamogga	No	Yes	No	Yes
UAS, Bangalore	Yes	No	Yes	No
KVAFSU, Bidar	Yes	No	Yes	Yes

Insufficient understanding or instruction in using internet information resources is another persistent problem. UAS libraries in Bangalore, Raichur, and Shivamogga reported this. It draws attention to the necessity of ongoing digital literacy training for researchers and library employees to guarantee that users can efficiently browse and use e-resources. Online resources are expensive, which is another obstacle, especially for KVAFSU Bidar and UAS Dharwad. High subscription costs may limit the library's efforts to increase access, even in cases where they are driven to do so. UAS Shivamogga and KVAFSU Bidar libraries mentioned vendor-related limitations, like license restrictions or insufficient support. These difficulties may make offering reliable and convenient access to digital resources more difficult. Even though every library has a unique situation, the results highlight the critical need for sufficient funding, continuous training, and more flexible, reasonably priced access to digital resources. To increase the overall efficacy of library services in Karnataka's agricultural institutions, these issues must be resolved.

6.6. Problems Faced by the Research Scholars

Table 6 provides a thorough overview of the issues that researchers at Karnataka's agricultural universities face while attempting to access online information resources. Overall, the data suggest that most difficulties are modest or isolated, rather than pervasive.

Table 6: Problems while using Online Information resources

Problems faced	Strongly Agree	Agree	Can't Say	Disagree	Strongly disagree
Lack of knowledge to use	0%	18%	0%	75%	7%
Inadequate ICT infrastructure	0%	6%	0%	73%	21%
Non-availability of relevant information	0%	9%	0%	73%	18%
Limited access to resources	0%	7%	5%	77%	11%
Low internet speed	0%	8%	14%	78%	0%
Access restricted by publishers	0%	8%	1%	62%	29%
Information overload	0%	11%	17%	56%	16%
Unable to access outside the University	0%	8%	4%	61%	27%
Lack of time	0%	15%	5%	63%	17%
Power failure	0%	0%	3%	72%	25%
The library staff are not supportive	0%	0%	5%	39%	69%

A lack of understanding about using internet resources is not a serious worry; 82% disagreed, demonstrating that most scholars are digitally proficient. Similarly, ICT infrastructure and access to critical information were mainly seen as adequate, with only a small percentage (6-9%) pointing out minor difficulties, most likely limited to specific locations or departments. A minority of respondents expressed concerns about low internet speed (8%), publisher access limitations (8%), and information overload (11%), indicating that these are situational rather than systemic. Most researchers reported no serious problems with remote access, while 8% did, probably due to VPN or login concerns. 15% of scholars admitted to having time constraints, which was most likely owing to their heavy academic burden. Power outages (3%) were rarely recorded, and there were almost no complaints regarding library staff support, indicating high librarian engagement and service quality.

7. Discussion

The present study evaluates the availability and quality of infrastructure facilities for accessing online information resources (OIR) in agricultural university libraries in Karnataka. The interpretation of these findings in the context of earlier research reveals convergences and divergences that highlight both progress and persistent challenges in digital access within the region's agricultural universities. The findings demonstrate that all libraries surveyed have adopted library management systems, primarily Koha, and staff members display proficient ICT skills. UAS Bangalore and UAS Raichur are at the forefront of database provision. The findings are consistent with those of Singh and Mahesh (2016), who noted significant advancements in automation within Indian agricultural university libraries, despite resource constraints. The unequal distribution of online databases reflects the disparities identified by Kannappanavar (2001) and Walmiki (2009), who noted insufficient hardware, software, and bandwidth in Karnataka universities. In our sample, awareness of OIR was exceptionally high at 100%, with 88% of participants being familiar with their subscribed resources. This exceeds the faculty awareness levels documented by Walmiki et al. (2010) for the UGC-Infonet Consortium. The observed improvement likely indicates enhanced digital literacy initiatives and broader internet access, corroborating Kumar and Singh's (2011) assertion that targeted awareness programs enhance resource utilization. Significant disparities in online database access highlight the necessity for collaborative resource-sharing and centralized subscription models to ensure equitable digital access, while the absence of institutional repositories at UHS Bagalkot and KVAFSU limits visibility and open access. Although staff exhibit strong ICT competence, continuous capacity-building in emerging technologies such as AI and advanced metadata standards is vital, alongside addressing funding constraints through collaborative grants, public-private partnerships, and national ICT initiatives (Upadhyay, 2006). Furthermore, the study's reliance on self-reported data and omission of undergraduate perspectives constrain the generalizability of findings, indicating the need for objective performance metrics and longitudinal assessment of ICT infrastructure development.

8. Conclusion

All libraries have adopted management systems-mainly Koha-indicating steady digital progress. Staff ICT skills are strong, and 88% of scholars know their subscribed OIRs. Internet connectivity, UPS support, and computer facilities are highly rated, but disparities persist in online database access, repository development, and funding. UAS Raichur and UAS Bangalore lead in digital readiness, while UHS Bagalkot and KVAFSU Bidar lag. Funding shortages and high subscription costs remain key challenges, though rising ICT literacy among users marks a positive

transformation. The study concludes that equitable digital access requires better resource distribution, financial planning, and repository creation.

This research uniquely links infrastructure adequacy with user experience, providing region-specific data crucial for policymaking in agricultural education. It supports digital transformation and open-access initiatives central to improving higher education and research productivity. The framework developed here can guide similar assessments in other domains, such as Fisheries or Veterinary sciences. Future studies should track changes over time, use performance metrics, and explore AI-driven approaches to digital management. Strengthening infrastructure, funding, and ICT training will ensure that Karnataka's agricultural university libraries emerge as sustainable digital innovation and knowledge equity centres.

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